

Double value from 17/05/74 Blues' triumph

WITH three points from Wycombe Wanderers' visit to Granleigh Road safely in the bag, the Blues stage the return match with Leytonstone tomorrow (Saturday) at Loakes Park. Tuesday's dramatic 2-1 victory over the Stones had double value.

As well as the three vital points from the match which kept them in the running for the £1,000 Rothmans Isthmian League title, it must have given the Blues a good deal of confidence for this, their last league match of the season.

Wanderers now know just what to expect from Leytonstone. They found out the hard way on Wednesday just how difficult it can be to crack the Stones' defence. The towering Mike Smith, although slow on the turn, is dominant in the air while John Charles, his centre back partner, has the mobility to sweep up anything loose on the ground.

There are several things Wycombe will want to improve on. For a start, their defence was not tight enough and gave John Brookes, Brian Harvey and Bill Ratty too much room to manoeuvre. Ex-Enfield man Brookes was particularly

dangerous while Ratty scored the goal and hit the post with another effort that could have been crucial.

But it is in midfield that Wanderers can really stamp their own authority. Although all three of the Wycombe trio played well individually on Wednesday, cohesion was lacking and a greater understanding tomorrow could well swing the game Wycombe's way.

At the time of writing, the result of the key Hendon v Bishop's Stortford encounter last night (Thursday) is not known. But Stortford have still to meet Woking and Walton and Hersham and must win both to beat Wanderers on points. Manager Ted Hardy was at the Leytonstone game on Wednesday and was far from despondent about the result.

He told me after the match, "I thought Wycombe deserved

their victory. After the poor first half, they played some good football. But we are still confident for our last three matches."

After Hendon, the most crucial of Stortford's games will be their meeting with Walton, which is being played at Slough Town's Dolphin Stadium, as Walton's home ground is being used for an athletics meeting. Walton have already showed their durability against Wycombe this week and having lost to Bishop's in a rather heated London Senior Cup final recently, they will be anxious for revenge.

Without a doubt, though, this is one of the closest finishes to the season for years. One thing Wycombe will not want to lose tomorrow is their unbeaten home record in the league. Only two teams have won at Loakes Park this term, Oxford United in a friendly and Peterborough in the F.A. Cup.